

SUSI Media Coverage: Looking at America with Fresh Eyes

Each year scholars, students and teachers come to the United States for short, intensive programs of study and travel sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. They attend one of 36 different *Study of the United States* institutes hosted by universities throughout the country, exploring such subjects as religious pluralism, new media, and leadership for women and American politics.

About 540 student leaders and 185 scholars and teachers attended these institutes in 2011. Many of them recently concluded their programs with a visit to the State Department, where they participated in an academic and cultural fair. They wore traditional costumes and talked about their home countries. They also reflected on their experiences in America.

Tommy Kain a Sierra Leonean who student who attended the Pluralism session in Nazareth College, Rochester, New York summarizes his experience as follows:

"Pluralism, as I came to understand, is diversity among people, in terms of religion, culture, politics, economics and all the rest. ... I noticed in the Rochester community, they have religious pluralism. It was surprising to see an Islamic leader taking us to other religious centers, Christians interacting with Muslims, Muslims interacting with Christians. ... I think here everyone is free to belong to any religion that he feels suits him. I'm a Christian, not because I wanted to become a Christian, but because I was born into Christianity."

[Photo Gallery: Looking at America with Fresh Eyes](#)

Tommy Kain in attendance with another Sierra Leonean student Hawa Barrie

